

Overall Outlook

This Human Rights Watch report addresses the abusive conditions faced by migrant construction workers in the UAE, specifically their exploitation by employers, and the UAE federal government's failure adequately to address these abuses

Moreover, while engaged in the hazardous work of constructing high-rises, workers face apparently high rates of injury and death with little assurance that their employers will cover their health care needs.

HUMAN

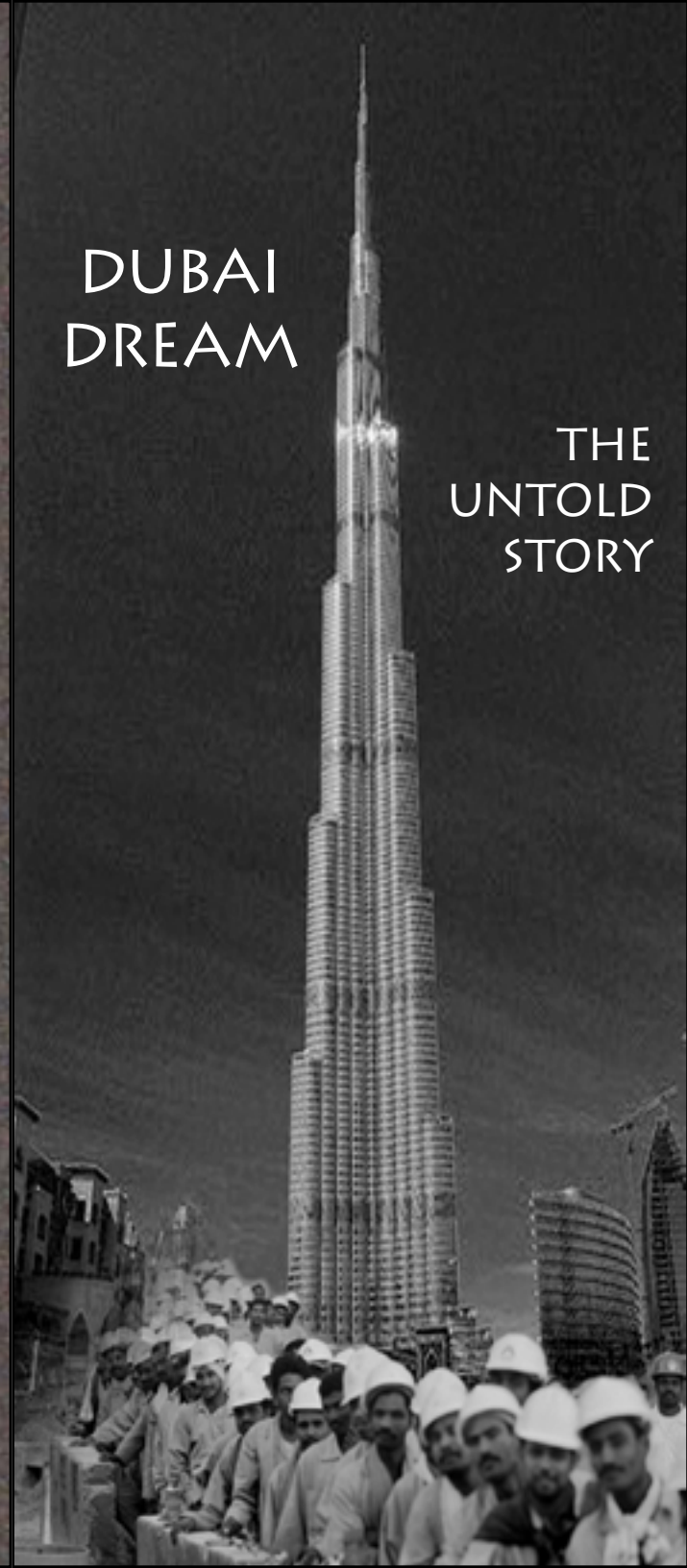
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DUBAI
DREAM

THE
UNTOLD
STORY





Facts and Statistics :

Within the UAE's resident population of 4,100,000, only 20 percent are citizens. The UAE's economy is entirely dependent on foreign workers.

According to government figures available for Dubai, 34 construction workers died at their work sites in 2004, and 39 in 2005, but based on figures from an independent investigation by a local trade publication, it appears that in 2004 the number of work-site deaths of Indian workers alone was certainly higher than the 34 recorded for all nationalities in Dubai.

Human Rights Watch learned that 140 government inspectors were responsible for overseeing the labor practices of more than 240,000 businesses employing migrant workers.

BUILDING TOWERS..

Legal Discrepancies and Issues :

UAE Federal Government has failed to enforce UAE law that since 1980 has required the government to implement a minimum wage, evidently choosing to uphold the interests of generally powerful and extremely profitable construction companies over the most basic rights of the migrant worker, who on average receives the equivalent of US\$175 a month for his labor on a construction site.

This stands in stark contrast to the average per capita income in the UAE of \$2,106 a month. Moreover, the government has refused to allow workers to organize trade unions and to bargain collectively with their employers.

In each aspect of the troubled working conditions faced by construction workers in the UAE, the federal government has done little or nothing. It has failed to create adequate mechanisms to investigate, prosecute, penalize, or remedy breaches of its own laws.

The federal government's efforts to counter employers' withholding of wages has been sporadic, at best.

.. CHEATING WORKERS

Suggestions for Reform :

- The federal government needs to take the lead in tackling problems faced by migrant construction workers.
- It should immediately initiate an independent inquiry into the abuses they experience. It should prohibit UAE companies from doing business with recruitment agencies that flout the ban on charging fees to workers.
- It should vigorously prosecute violations of UAE labor law, imposing meaningful penalties, and should enforce the labor law's minimum wage provision.
- It should improve data collection about migrant workers, and substantially increase labor inspection capacity. The UAE government should also ratify international instruments protecting workers' and migrant workers' rights.

